



**Secretariat for African American Catholics
Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs**

November 7, 2003

Your Eminence/Your Excellency,

The annual World AIDS Day commemoration on December 1, under the theme "Live and Let Live," is an international special observance held to call attention to the catastrophic effects of HIV/AIDS on the world population. Especially hard hit are sub-Saharan Africa and communities of color in the United States and the Caribbean.

Families and communities of color have been especially devastated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that there may be up to 950,000 HIV cases in the United States and 40,000 new cases a year. Of these, over 50 percent of the new cases are in African American communities, and 61 percent of AIDS cases among teenagers reported in 2000 were in African Americans. Hispanics account for 20 percent of the total reported AIDS cases. And 78 percent of all incidences of AIDS in females are from those two groups.

There is an urgent need to mobilize the Catholic community and the general public to fight the HIV/AIDS crisis. The Committee for Hispanic Affairs and the Committee for African American Catholics, our respective secretariats in the USCCB, along with the National Catholic AIDS Network, have joined together to address this crisis in our communities.

We need your help. During 2003, World AIDS Day coincides with the beginning of Advent. As we begin this season of preparation and anticipation, we invite you to encourage the faithful under your charge to join their prayers with others in the hope that an end to this epidemic will soon be realized. "May God wish to enlighten believers as to the true and ultimate reason for existence in such a way that always and everywhere they might be messengers of undying hope...And still today, facing the impending plague of AIDS, while searching for effective remedies, we trust that, with the help of God, life will triumph over death and joy over suffering." [Pope John Paul II November 1989, Vatican AIDS Conference]

Please find attached a letter Bishop Howard J. Hubbard in his capacity as Moderator of the National Catholic AIDS Network sent along with a liturgy resource page to individual parishes. If you have questions, call the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs 202-541-3150, the Secretariat for African American Catholics, 202-541-3177, or the National Catholic AIDS Network 773 - 508-7080.

Sincerely,



Most Reverend Gordon D. Bennett, S.J.
Chairman
Committee on African American Catholics



Most Reverend James A. Tamayo
Chairman
Committee for Hispanic Affairs